

section is changed, many of our grandchildren will continue to be punished for the sins of our grandfathers. That should not happen in America.

Using election data from 1964—when 60% of Americans today were not even alive—to determine discrimination patterns today is deeply troubling and raises questions as to the fairness and constitutionality of the legislation. The criteria should be updated to the relevant last three presidential elections to assure equal protection under the law.

Finally, I continue to believe that section 203 is bad public policy. In America, English is the language of opportunity. This common language binds us together as a people and strengthens us as a Nation. We must continue to emphasize the importance of learning English to those integrating into American society and culture. This is important to them and critical to the Nation as a whole. Those entering the country illegally clearly are not allowed to vote and naturalized citizens must demonstrate English proficiency before becoming Americans. Thus, contrary to popular notions, there are relatively few Americans not sufficiently proficient with English to cast a ballot. Those that are not already have their voting rights protected by laws permitting them to bring a translator into the voting booth with them. If a city or state wishes to print multiple ballots in numerous languages the Federal Government should not prevent them from doing so. On the other hand, the federal government should not mandate that they do it either. Simply put, taxpayers should not be compelled by federal law to pay for printing ballots in languages other than English.

The amendments that I supported to shorten the bill's extension to 10 years, apply the VRA fairly and nationwide, remove jurisdictions from coverage when they have shown a consistent respect for the voting rights of minority citizens, and end a requirement forcing taxpayers to pay for ballots in languages other than English—would have greatly improved this bill. I hope that appropriate changes are made to strengthen this bill, so that I am able to vote for final passage when it comes back to the House.

There is no doubt that the debate over the Voting Rights Act is an emotional one. For many Americans it has become an icon and rightfully so. The VRA has been a critical weapon in the struggle for civil rights and equal opportunity and should remain so. But the emergency provisions were written in a different time to address a different set of challenges. There is danger in allowing symbolism to overcome reality and principle.

This is not a vote I took lightly. I know too often in America that when the accusation is racism, one may wrongly be considered guilty until proven innocent. I regret the phenomena but will not let it dictate my conscience. Everyday we should not only work to root out racial discrimination but should work to reduce race consciousness as well. As Supreme Court Chief Justice Roberts opined in the case *LVLAC v. Perry*: "It is a sordid business, this divvying us up by race." I agree. Instead we should all work together to achieve Martin Luther King, Jr.'s goal of achieving a society that judges our children "not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

FANNIE LOU HAMER, ROSA PARKS, AND CORETTA SCOTT KING VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AND AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2006

SPEECH OF

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 13, 2006

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 9) to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965:

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 9, the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments. Since its enactment in August of 1965, the Voting Rights Act (VRA) has helped bring us closer to realizing the true spirit of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees all American citizens the quintessential democratic right to vote. Today we'll vote to reauthorize expiring provisions of the VRA and by doing so send a signal that we will not tolerate discrimination at the polls.

Some of our colleagues will rise today to offer amendments that would weaken the VRA. I am opposed to any attempts to dilute the intent and spirit of the VRA by weakening Section 5 of the bill. Section 5 ensures that the Federal Government will take a closer look at election practices in states and localities with a history of discrimination at the polls.

Our Nation has made a great deal of progress since 1965 when the VRA was first signed into law by President Johnson. But some municipalities continue to make it difficult, intentionally or otherwise, for ethnic and racial minority voters to register and vote. The great civil rights leaders of the 1960s, including our distinguished colleague Rep. JOHN LEWIS, worked tirelessly to fight discrimination in all aspects of our society. They knew then, and we know now, that the right of all Americans to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy. We must continue their great legacy and pass the bill before us today without amendment.

PLEDGE PROTECTION ACT OF 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 19, 2006

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2389) to amend title 28, United States Code, with respect to the jurisdiction of Federal courts over certain cases and controversies involving the Pledge of Allegiance:

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Mr. Chairman, on July 19, 2006, I voted against H.R. 2389, the Pledge Protection Act of 2005.

The American flag is a symbol of liberty and justice, of freedom of speech and expression, as well as the other freedoms we cherish which are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. But even more important than the symbol are the ideals and principles that the symbol rep-

resents. I believe the best way to honor the American flag is not to wrap ourselves in it, but to respect and honor the values for which it stands. That our Nation can tolerate disrespect for our flag is proof of the enduring strength of our Nation. It is proof to me that ours is the greatest nation on earth.

I served in the U.S. Army and Army Reserves. I know how deeply our veterans love and revere our flag. I share those feelings for our flag and all that it represents.

Our democracy has withstood many tests over time, and has been strengthened as a result. There is no more important protection provided by the First Amendment than its protection of political speech and expression.

In a letter to Senator PATRICK LEAHY of Vermont dated May 18, 1999, former Secretary of State (then General) Colin L. Powell wrote to express his concerns regarding a constitutional amendment banning flag burning: "The First Amendment exists to insure that freedom of speech and expression applies not just to that with which we agree or disagree, but also that which we find outrageous. I would not amend that great shield of democracy to hammer a few miscreants. The flag will still be flying proudly long after they have slunk away. . . . If I were a member of Congress, I would not vote for the proposed amendment. . . ."

I agree wholeheartedly with Colin Powell's statement, and believe it applies here as well. The Pledge of Allegiance is an invaluable part of our national heritage, but we must also bear in mind the immeasurable significance of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Finally, I have deep concerns about current efforts to deny the Federal courts, including the Supreme Court, the ability to review the constitutionality of our Federal laws. I believe preserving our three-branch system of government is in our Nation's best interest.

CONGRATULATING LAKE COUNTY ELECTRICIANS JATC CLASS OF 2006 GRADUATES

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 24, 2006

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sincerity and admiration that I offer congratulations to several of Northwest Indiana's most talented, dedicated, and hardworking individuals. On Friday, July 28, 2006, the Lake County Electricians Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee, JATC, of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the National Electrical Contractors Association will honor the class of 2006 at their annual Apprentice Completion Banquet, which will be held at the Avalon Manor Banquet Hall in Hobart, Indiana.

This year, the Lake County Electricians JATC will be recognizing and honoring the following graduates, who have completed the apprentice training: Nicholas Bacan, Daniel Boyd, Glen Britton, Nicholas Cardaras, Gonzaliev Castillo, Robert Coleman, James Crocker, David Delaney, Oliver Ewing, Jason M. Gallion, Nathan Gombus, Nathan Gonzales, Eric Hardesty, Jeremy Huber, Mark Jackson, Eric Kociara, Craig B. Konopasek,